Peoria home of Pabst Blue Ribbon
“finest beer served... anywhere!”
The beginning of Pabst in Peoria

• 1881 - Pabst Brewing Co. of Milwaukee, opens a “branch” in Peoria.

• Branches back then acted as a distributor and sometimes bottler depending on distance from the Milwaukee brewery.

• They also worked as real estate agents for land purchases for tied houses.
Because of World War I sugar rationing, USDA recommended Maltose as a sugar substitute.

Maltose is a syrup used in cooking and home brewing.

Decatur Brewing Co. – Began manufacturing Maltose before the onset of Prohibition, as a way to increase sales, and to prepare for national prohibition.

1918 Decatur Brewing Co. first used the name Premier Malt Products Co.

1924 - Due to increasing sales and the need for expansion, PMP built a Malt House in Peoria, and bought an old factory in Peoria Heights to install equipment to manufacture malt products.

PMP Offices officially move to Peoria from Decatur.
Premier Malt Products – Plant #3

1925 – Production starts at the new Peoria Heights Factory.
PREMIER MALT PRODUCTS CO.
PEORIA HEIGHTS, ILL.
In 1927, PMP bought the assets of Bosch Food Products Co., who were making malt syrup in the old Leisy Brewery. The Grist Mill was added on in 1938. (Located near the RiverPlex)
The Four Plants of the Premier Malt Products Co.
Home of Blue Ribbon

America's Greatest Selling Malt Extract

It makes a big difference where your Malt Extract is manufactured. The special facilities of these immense modern factories are back of every can of Blue Ribbon. These plants contain the finest Malt Extract equipment in the world. *Merit built them—merit keeps them running at capacity.*
Premier Malt Products (1924-1932)

**Malt Syrup:** used by; bakers, other food producers, and tobacco manufacturers.

**Pharmaceutical Syrups:** sold to manufacturing chemists.

**Maltose:** A syrup made from the action of malt diastase on corn, rice or other starchy substances.
With national support leaning to the repeal of Prohibition, breweries that stayed in business making other products started gearing up for return to beer making.

Pabst Brewing Co. in Milwaukee was ready to resume full scale production, but was low on capital and would have to borrow.

Premier Malt Products had great capital and could easily transform its manufacturing facilities to making beer, but lacked a nationally recognized beer.

The Presidents of both firms were business acquaintances who met while serving on the National Malt Products Manufacturers Association Board.

They agreed to **merge** the companies to form the *Premier-Pabst Corporation*, and the final agreement was signed on Oct. 28th, 1932.

Apr 7th, 1933, beer was again legal, and Premier-Pabst was ready to start manufacturing Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer and Ale in Peoria Heights.
Premier-Pabst Corporation 1933-1938
Peoria Heights in the 1930’s…..

• Production began in 1934 at the Peoria Heights plant.

• Pabst Blue Ribbon Ale and Beer were the first brands produced in Peoria Heights by Premier-Pabst in 1934.

• In 1935, beer in CANS were introduced for the first time.
• On Dec 20th, 1938, the stockholders voted to return the name of Pabst Brewing Co. to the business.

• Business was booming for Pabst.

• In 1941, the Peoria Heights plant had a 1,000,000 barrel capacity.
Beer in cans were discontinued for the war effort in the U.S.

Some brewers were allowed to make cans for the U.S. soldiers overseas. The Olive Drab design was to keep any glare off the can, to keep the G.I. safe from being spotted while enjoying a warm beer.

The silver design were for U.S. bases in non battle zones.

Millions of pounds of Premose were sold during WWII to sugar-short industries.
Post War
(1947) Construction starts on the new
Office Building and
Brewery Renovation
• Modernized the brewery.
• Added Main office building with a Hospitality room.
• Celebrities brought in for dedication ceremony.
• Dedication was the week of March 21st, 1949.
The “33” Room
More than just Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer was produced in Peoria Heights......

- Casino Beer (1934)
- Old Tankard Ale (1935)
- Eastside Old Tap
- Big Cat Malt Liquor
- Blatz
- Red White & Blue
THE INTENDED CHEERFUL GREETING "Happy Holidays," with the doomed Pabst Brewery looming darkly behind it, takes on a bitter tone now that Pabst has announced it will close down its Peoria Heights operations completely within three months.

Manager Sees No Hope For Pabst Plant
The End....

- March of 1982 was the last beer brewed at the Peoria Heights Brewery.
- The Peoria Heights plant was the 4th largest brewery in the U.S. at the time.
- 700 people were employed in 1982, with a peak employment over 1,000.
The fire and demolition......

Fire on March 20th, 1986.
The Heights Brewery site today:
Photo Resources:

- Peoria Historical Society
- Les Jones Personal Collection
- Peoria Journal Star
- Marty Wombacher, PJ Star

Other Resources:

- The Pabst Blue Ribbon Story, by Thomas C. Cochran
- Premier Malt Products website.